

TWENTIETH CENTURY PERSPECTIVE
ON THE BOOK OF JOB

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis proposes that, rather than giving an answer to the problem of undeserved suffering, the Book of Job provides a vehicle which each reader may use to find his/her own answer.

Chapter 1 outlines the three levels on which the Book operates - parable, dramatic poem and vehicle - and examines the first two levels. Chapter 2 makes a case for the third level of operation, and how it enables the book to transcend the centuries. The next three chapters show how the book can be used to explore three styles of twentieth century psychotherapy; psychiatry; grief therapy and the way of myth and archetype. The final chapter gives the writer's own interpretation of the book, emphasising the human relationships between its characters.

Chapter 1

THE TWO STORIES OF JOB

Observe any living organism from a distance - the planet earth from outer space or a single flower from a few feet away - and you will see static, self-contained simplicity. Come closer, and you will perceive all the fragility and mutability of a living thing engaged in life processes. Come closer still, and see the energy, activity and change at the heart of every living thing, which is the basis of all life. An examination of the Book of Job takes us through such layers of identity: two of them explicit in the construction of the book, the third in the responses readers have made to it over the centuries.

The Book of Job operates on at least three levels: the level of parable, the moral tale we find in the prose narrative at the beginning and end of the book; then the psychodynamic level of the poetic drama, where Job is seen shedding an outgrown theological skin and growing a new one; finally a participatory level, inviting the reader, every reader, to enter into the drama, applying it to personal experiences of pain and working out a personal theodicy. In this century, the novelist Ursula K LeGuin appears to have coined the term "psychomyth" for such a dramatic presentation, designed to enable the reader to enter in. She uses it to describe her short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", in which the narrator explicitly invites the reader to consider experientially what price is worth paying for Utopia.¹ I would suggest that, however new its name, the psychomyth is no recent invention: that the Old Testament Book of Job operates in just this way. Then, the seemingly cryptic ending to the dramatic poetry, in which we watch the hero gaining enlightenment but are not told what the enlightenment is, is not cryptic at all. It is open-endedness: an opening for the reader to enter and reach his/her own enlightenment.

My first chapter examines the first two layers and their inter-relation with one another. It introduces an extended look at the third layer in the succeeding chapters.

1. LeGuin, Introduction to "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas". p.112

THE PARABLE

The prose framework of the book tells a simple, enduring moral tale. It is set on a panoramic stage to let us see its universal applicability: to all times and places, to all sorts and conditions of humanity. "There lived in the land of Uz" This "once upon a time" opening and the faraway setting of UZ promise a fairytale or parable. Job, a citizen of no land with identifiable character or history, lacks all individuality, even that of failings and foibles, in his absolute uprightness, just as his nameless wife is a stereotype of "any wicked fool of a woman", and God and Satan are personifications of heavenly polarities. No emotion is expressed in the story and no motivation; only a few self-explanatory words and actions. From the reader's vantage point, they are like puppets on a cosmic stage, or Everyman in the medieval mystery plays, sufficiently far away to show the scene shifting from earth to heaven and back again. Repetition of the phrase "when the day came" to introduce each shift of scene emphasises the ritual character of the movement back and forth. The lesson of the tale is clear: patient Job declares it himself:

Naked I came from the womb,

naked I shall return whence I came.

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away;

blessed be the name of the Lord.

(1:21)

And the Lord, who both gives and takes away, who has permitted that Job have everything taken from him, gives it to him again, twice-over at the appointed time. Perhaps it is a reward; we are inclined to read this message although interestingly, it is not stated in the narrative. Nevertheless, the shape of the story satisfies us: Everyman is tested and passes the test, then receives his just reward. There is confirmation that the word makes sense, and that retributive justice is its undergirding principle.

The parable is the epitome of classic Old Testament wisdom philosophy: the upright and wise prosper if they persevere, while the wicked receive their just deserts sooner or later. And what is the essence of that upright life?

The fear of the Lord is wisdom,

And to turn from evil is understanding. (28:28)

Job, who fears God and shuns evil, prospers, confirming God's justice. And if he endures deprivation for a time, it is only because all humanity is imperfect and needs tribulations to learn from. As Eliphaz is to put it,

Happy the man whom God rebukes!

therefore do not reject the discipline of the Almighty

For, though he wounds, he will bind up;

the hands that smite will heal. (5: 17-18)

The moral is clear and familiar: Go and do likewise.

THE DRAMA

The difficulty begins when we picture ourselves doing likewise. Life isn't like that, the rebellious spirit may well declare; human beings don't respond like that to adversity. How could anyone respond to the loss of home, family, possessions and health with such patience? Job is too good to be true. How would a real person respond? The poetry is an answer to this last question. It takes on a life of its own, as we move closer to the scene and the puppet Job of the cosmic stage comes near enough for us to see his full humanity.

The dramatic poem is altogether less aesthetically satisfying, less neat than the prose narrative. The dialogues grow increasingly repetitive until there is confusion in the later cycles even over who is making which speech. This is mirrored by scholarly confusion about authorship and order as the book proceeds, as well as debates among commentators as to whether Elihu, or even God, has added anything new to the argument. All these provide an objective correlative for the emotional turmoil the poetry expresses. There is certainly a striking contrast between the often repetitive mountains of poetic images and the terseness with which the prose tale is told. Turbulent emotion is the focus for our attention, as we come close to the man who is being tested and watch his reactions. He mourns his losses and wishes himself dead. He seeks comfort from the world he knew - old friends and old religious teachings - and finds them both inadequate to his needs and his experience. He veers between love and hate of the God who has been the focus of his life; and ultimately, he attains a new vision of God and their relationship.

This drama begins when, after seven days of silence, which might be interpreted as acquiescence but clearly is not, Job erupts in an effusion of anger and despair. He does more than merely wish himself dead; he curses the very day of his conception, willing total obliteration. His three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, take their lead from him and begin to offer "comfort". In fact, as comforters, they prove absolutely dreadful. Job soon pleads with them to be quiet and listen to him (13: 5-6, 21:1ff). But they are too concerned with proving their expertise.

And experts indeed they are: spokesmen for the wisdom of their day, as codified in collections like the Book of Proverbs, studied and refined. They are going to put that wisdom to the test in just the kind of situation it is designed for. "Happy (and blessed) he who has found wisdom, and the man who has acquired understanding"; (Prov. 3:13). "The shrewd man of business will succeed well, but the happy man is he who trusts in the Lord." (Prov. 16:20). They have come to help their friend who is so visibly suffering to mend his situation through such wisdom. They begin with confidence, for they are certain that God is just and his creation conservative of good and that they can convince Job of this too, thus bringing him peace of mind. They cover their territory with thoroughness and determination and with the heavy handedness of people certain they are right.

The style they use as well as their arguments show them to be representative of the wisdom tradition, leaving the reader in no doubt where they stand. Indeed, their opening speech, from Eliphaz, includes every significant indicator of wisdom writing. There are the sharp distinctions between absolute values (eg. 4: 7-8), the doctrines of retribution (4:7, 5:2, etc.), the strictly balanced lines and couplets (5:6-7, 10-16, etc.), the incorporation of aphorisms (5:2, 7), supported by references to personal experience (4:12ff), the numerical sayings (5:19), the "happiness" sayings (5:17). All three Comforters appeal at some time or other to the antiquity of their views to give them validity; they also claim inspiration from a higher power: Eliphaz's vision in Chapter 4 and Zophar's "spirit beyond my understanding" (20:3).

Eliphaz is confident of success in his opening sally. He is sure he has only to remind Job how watertight the old arguments are; then Job will appeal to God, and all will be well. Eliphaz's theme through all his speeches is the appeal to God. In Chapter 4, it is the appeal of the just man for redress; in Chapter 15, he upbraids Job for his inappropriate tone to God; in Chapter 22, he urges penitent supplication on the part of the reprobate. Bildad's theme is the unerring justice of a God who grows increasingly distant from increasingly unworthy humanity, and Zophar's the punitive power of the Almighty, also growing grimmer as the conviction of Job's wickedness grows. Together, they develop a cogent theodicy, which is, however, a world away from Job's present experience. And this is precisely where the creative tension of the drama lies: between the consolations of received wisdom, long established and expertly expounded, and the voice of experience, which vehemently declares that it isn't like that, that it doesn't feel like that.

The friends must choose between these two increasingly opposed ways of interpreting Job's desperate situation. Daunted by the disorderliness of his experiential universe and the threat it poses to their own, they continue to consolidate their world view through the succeeding discourses. Ultimately, their chosen way leads them to condemn both his courage and his character in defiance of the facts as he states them in Chapter 29. And his own version must be more nearly factual than theirs. For Job were not "a man of blameless and upright life" in the terms of the prologue, the book would lose its point as theodicy. What they first intended as a gospel comfort becomes a doctrine of damnation. Job, with some justification, has begun to see them as another of the torments inflicted by God (16:11ff). Certainly, they substantiate Robert Davidson's assertion in "The Courage to Doubt"² that, when faced with the painful prospect of rethinking doctrine in the light of experience, it can prove easier to rewrite experience.

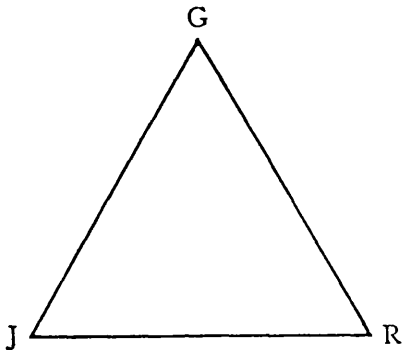
2. Davidson, pp.174ff.

Nevertheless, the friends do contribute to an enormous change in Job, not despite their clumsy efforts but through them. As their inadequate assurances and their false accusations intensify his anguish, he turns ever more toward God. And as he recognises the gap between their assertions and his reality, he is forced to acknowledge a wider concept of God than the Dispenser of unerring justice. In his heart of hearts, he has long known the God he ultimately meets. As early as Chapter 9, he describes that God, using phrases that pre-echo God's own questions:

It is God who moves mountains, giving them no rest,
turning them over in his wrath;
who makes the earth start from its place
so that its pillars are convulsed;
who commands the sun's orb not to rise
and shuts up the stars under his seal;
who by himself spread out the heavens
and trod on the sea monster's back.
He passes by me and I do not see him;
he moves on his way undiscerned by me;
if he hurries on, who can bring him back?

Who will ask him what he does? (9:5-12)

His inability fully to acknowledge that reality results from his unwillingness to relinquish the belief on which he has based his life. In his study of "The Meaning of the Book of Job"³, Mattiahu Tsevat provides a useful diagram of job's original belief system:



3. Tsevat, pp.104

The three points of his equilateral triangle are a God who relates to humanity, Job, the upright man, and the code of Retributive justice. Within the context of the poem, the first two are undeniable. Job wants to hold all three in balance, but his changed circumstances make this impossible. He must let go of one, and his friends' arguments push him to recognise this. Only when he has let go of the doctrine of retributive justice, can he see God as God is.

Job's ability, through most of the poem, both to see and not to see what God is may explain the disagreement among commentators over the value of Elihu's speeches. Some critics say he adds nothing significant to the debate,⁴ while MacLeish and Stephen Mitchell imply the same by eliminating him from their adaptations. In a sense they are right. His function is to introduce the God beyond human accountability, who is about to appear. Analysing the narrative structure, Habel distinguishes Elihu from Job's other interlocutors, designating him rightly the "preamble" to God's appearance:⁵

Look up at the sky and then consider,
Observe the rain-clouds towering above you
How does it touch him if you have sinned?
However many your misdeeds, what does it mean to him?
If you do right, what good do you bring him,
what does he gain from you? (35:5-7)

He echoes things others, including Job himself, have already said. One example is Job's explanation of his fear:

My feet have kept to the path he set me,
I have followed his way and not turned from it.
I do not ignore the commands that come from his lips,
I have stored in my heart what he says.
He decides and who can turn him from his purpose?
He does what his own heart desires (23:11f)

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4. q.v. Rowley, pp.262ff, who finds Elihu's central argument that "suffering is disciplinary" invalidated by the description of Job in the Prologue, and therefore declares it irrelevant.
5. Habel, pp.32-33

Another is his hymn to God's might in Chapter 25 (5-36), so great and unreachable that we hear only a "faint whisper". But it seems Job is able to hear them said for the first time.

THE UNITY OF THE BOOK

The dynamic character of the poetry is so different from the static stagedness of the prose that it is easy to miss what Tsevat points out: that the lesson learned by the patient Job of the prose and that learned by the explosive protagonist of the poetry are one and the same. When the protesting Job is finally granted what he demands, a face-to-face encounter with God, he meets "the Almighty", the Lord of life and death. This is the Creator and Destroyer, who knows the home of light and where darkness dwells, who created the magnificent war horse and the foolish ostrich, the delicate fawn and the lioness who hunts it to feed her young. The destructiveness at the heart of creation is a theme running all through God's reply to Job, and Job's own suffering becomes, by implication, part of that grand design. Job accepts it all and abases himself in adoration. The lesson is the same:

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away;
blessed be the name of the Lord.

We might be viewing in close-up what we see at a cosmic distance in the prose tale. We might be following the reasoning which leads to Job's seemingly patient acceptance of his condition.

Indeed, what we see thus dramatised might all be happening in Job's head, as he works through the pain, with the different characters personifying his own conflicting states of mind. Words that sound unduly harsh in the mouth of a longstanding friend like Eliphaz,

Do not think that he reproves you because you are pious,
that on this count he brings you to trial.

No, it is because you are a very wicked man,
and your depravity passes all bounds. (22:4-5)

might come naturally to the self-accusatory mind of one struggling to make sense of his own unaccountable misfortune. Even the strongest person may begin to down his or her own rectitude in the face of such extreme

adversity. And there is nothing his Comforters tell him that he does not already know. Eliphaz reminds him of this in his opening speech:

Think how once you encouraged those who faltered,
how you braced feeble arms,
how a word from you upheld the stumblers
and put strength into weak knees. (4:3-4)

Why should not even God's be an inner voice, speaking out of the tempest of Job's own consciousness? As will be discussed later, Carl Jung asserts in his "Answer to Job", that this God is morally inferior to Job. This may be true if the drama happens in Job's mind, for the God we envisage must always be something less than God. It must be that part that one human mind is capable of grasping. In any case, God does not change in the course of the poem; Job's understanding does. He grows spiritually in the course of the poem until, by letting go of the ordering limitations of retributive justice, he is able to envisage a God as untamed as the tempest.

THE EPILOGUE

The Epilogue, which has dissatisfied so many readers, is equally applicable to poetry and prose stories. If the prose tale is taken alone, the restoration of Job's wealth seems a reward to one who has passed God's test. Yet this is never stated to be the case. The God of the whirlwind might equally well have restored it twice-over from caprice, or for unfathomable reasons hidden in the Divine nature. Ironically, the reward Job receives is precisely the one described by Eliphaz (5:17-26) as ordained for the righteous man. While the giving of divine gifts may render this epilogue problematic, it is necessary to have some down-to-earth conclusion to bring Job back to the world where lessons can be lived out. Hartley suggests in his commentary that God needs to be earthed too. He concludes, as I shall, by quoting W. Vischer:

"This realistic this-worldly conclusion of the book shows powerfully that the real decision whether God is truly God falls in this life. Here and now, faith must prove true.⁶

6. Hartley, p.47

Chapter 2

MEANING OR MYSTIFICATION?

AMBIGUITIES

It sometimes seems that the Book of Job sets out deliberately to bewilder its readers. Is there any aspect of it not open to question? Sorting through "Current Trends in the Study of the Book of Job"⁷ in a lecture to the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, Ronald J Williams explores numerous areas of scholarly debate. They include the date or dates of composition, placed anywhere between the seventh and third centuries B.C; relationship to (roughly) contemporary middle eastern theodicies; discrepancies among early translations; ambiguous and unusual use of language; genre. Is Job a tragedy, a comedy, a tragicomedy or a masterpiece of irony? and authorship. The last category provides a particularly rich field for exploration and debate: Was the book, as we have it written as a unit? Is the prose a genuine old tale? Were Chapter 28 and/or its concluding verse and/or Job's apologia and/or Elihu's speech(es) and/or God's speech(es) and/or the Epilogue written later? By the same or different author(s)? What is the original order of the third cycle of dialogues? Almost every imaginable configuration is tried, with actual and sometimes conjectural material. H L Ginsburg is probably the most daring arranger but not the only daring one. He postulates:

an original work consisting of Job 1:1-2:13, after which a section now absent from the text is assumed to portray the friends as following the lead of Job's wife in counselling Job to reject so cruel a God. This was immediately succeeded by chapters 27-28, in which he counters his friends' heresy. Possibly a further missing section came next, in which the Deity commended Job's words. The whole concluded with 42:7-17, describing the Divine rebuke of the friends and the rewarding of Job. What we possess in chapters 3-42 (omitting chapters 27-28) is the later work of a great poet who reversed the roles of Job and his friends.

Given the antiquity of the book, we can scarcely expect to find a definitive answer to any of these questions. Williams commends Northrop Frye and Brevard Childs for their common plea to focus on the work in its

7. In Aufrecht, Ed., Studies in the Book of Job, p.15

present form. I agree, although there is an attractive dynamic in studying the various chapters and speeches as successive attempts to amplify the message of the book. Margaret Crook aims imaginatively to reconcile the two approaches in *The Cruel God*, postulating a kind of Divinity Faculty class of wisdom scholars, studying the old prose tale trying to make it fit real life.⁸ And why not? With its fictional setting so clearly stated in the first line, freeing us from confines of historicity, we can apply the work freely to our own time and condition. The flow of diverse interpretations will doubtless continue. They indicate less the probability of writing the definitive commentary than the richness of the textual conundrums and the appeal of the exercise. Attractiveness is perhaps an understatement. Williams reports having catalogued more than fifteen hundred books and articles on Job during the years he taught a post-graduate seminar on the subject.

Among current respected commentators, there is a comparable divergence of viewpoints. Norman Habel⁹ cites Tsevat with approval and follows through a similar theological interpretation, although he sees the book as concerned with anthropodicy¹⁰ as well as theodicy: seeking a new basis for God's integrity as well as Job's. Hartley¹¹ traces a structure of interweaving themes, ranging wider than Habel's, which "probes the multiple aspects of human suffering". The medium is the message for him as well, and he finds it in the dramatic framework itself as well as in the thematic one. He does not explicate the former but presents it as an intriguing pattern of tensions and resolutions in the form of triads with the resolving element in each becoming an element in the tension of the next. Leo G Perdue¹² uses Job to illustrate archetypal mythic patterns of revolt and creation expressing the central Joban metaphor of conflict. Although helpful in tracing the book's narrative skeleton, I find this the least satisfying approach. It concentrates on metaphor and pure archetypal patterns, taking no account of character (in contrast to Jung and Campbell, examined in my

8. Crook, pp.1-6

9. Habel (1985), pp.60-69

10. q.v. Crenshaw, "Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy", pp.1-12

11. Hartley, pp.43-50

12. Perdue, 1991

Chapter 5). It seems an arid approach to the Book of Job, which is a tale of personalities and contains no action adventure at all. Finally, the most recent commentary, David Clines's celebrates the versatility of the book and the pluralism of the times. Clines begins his introduction, "These first pages are intended to enable readers to use this book for their own purposes...."¹³ Later, he offers feminist, pacifist and vegetarian readings to be examined, along with others, regardless of one's allegiances. "The more readings, the more stereoscopic our picture of Book the of Job".¹⁴

THE SEARCH FOR THE MEANING

The most pondered of all Job's riddles is the question of the meaning of the book. What is the answer to the dilemma it presents: what is the explanation of undeserved suffering? Perhaps the chief attraction lies here, in the lure of the chase; for certainly, the answer has proved remarkably elusive. Commentary after critique after analysis after interpretation after pastoral application after artistic impression has sought to find the meaning among the re-ordered speeches and divergent translations.

It is not that such messages are inexpressible. The singer of Psalm 73, troubled like Job,¹⁵ has a consciousness-raising experience in the synagogue which he does not describe; perhaps it is indescribable. The lesson he learns is clear, however; and he is ready to share it. In an uncertain and changing world, relationship with God is the greatest good and the sole certainty:

When my heart was embittered
I felt the pangs of envy,
I would not understand, so brutish was I,
I was a mere beast in thy sight, O God.

13. Clines, xxix

14. Ibid, xlviii

15. Martin Buber (pp.33ff) distinguishes between the psalmist's perplexity. Why do the wicked prosper? and Job's, Why do the righteous suffer? It is perhaps easier to solve the former puzzle, where personal pain is not so acute.

Yet I am always with thee,
thou holdest my right hand.

Whom have I in heaven but thee?

And having thee, I desire nothing else on earth (73:21-23, 25)

Job's epiphany is just the other way round. We share his awesome vision of a God encompassing all creation. We share his awe and see him repent in dust and ashes:

I know that thou canst do all things
and that no purpose is beyond thee.

But I have spoken of great things which I have not understood,
things too wonderful for me to know.

I knew of them only by report,

but now I see them with my own eyes. (42:2-3, 5)

But we are left without the message, the moral. We are never told the insight he gains that stills his agonised questioning.

Having accompanied him all the way on his long and physically dangerous journey, are we to be turned away at the last moment and denied the reward of the answer? Some commentators have condemned this lack of moral as a major flaw in the book, concluding, as John Ferguson does, that "it is a wonderful dramatic poem but theologically inadequate".¹⁶ In Ferguson's view, it fails to answer its own questions, and Job's God is to blame: "God neither explains nor defends his actions. Instead he knocks Job down with a terrifying display of power...." Critics like Ferguson are looking for a particular kind of answer, not to be found here: "... we are rightly suspicious of a God who speaks out of a whirlwind and are readier to be persuaded by a still small voice". As he goes on to say, Ferguson has already found his answer to unmerited suffering in the Suffering Servant. Suffering, he says, educates its victim by developing the qualities necessary to endure the experience, and teaches others by the sufferer's example. The firmness with which he holds this view appears in his readiness to apply this justification to such doubtful cases as Auschwitz.¹⁷ Since it is so central to him, he is unlikely to accept any lesson the egocentric Job might teach.

16. Ferguson, p.69

17. Ibid, pp.76-79

Others are equally convinced that there is a message, however hard it may be to find. Mattiahu Tsevat is one of these, and he gives reasons for his conviction in terms of both literary and theological unity. First, a poem about the search for an answer would lack unity if it did not provide an answer. Second, the oath which ends Job's Apologia sets up an expectation which must be fulfilled. Third, theologically speaking, if the expectation of an answer were not met, "the reader would be cut loose from the moorings of tradition and faith and left adrift". (Tsevat pp.80-81) Similarly he is convinced that the answer must be in God's speeches not only because they come at the end of the book, in proper order after the questions, but because God is the most important character. There are unstated assumptions here about both poetic and theological unity which both poets and theologians of our time might well question. Where, I wonder, would he find the resolution in *Waiting for Godot*?

Tsevat finds a meaning which meets his criteria. It is logically consistent; it is found in God's speeches, at the end of the poetry, and is confirmed, as he reasons, in the prose. Simply, it is this: the principle of retributive justice is "the touchstone of man's life and his conduct within society". Naturally, therefore, humanity wants it to be part of the divine order; sadly, this is not the case. Hence, the pain which the Job in us feels when caught in the tension between wish and reality.

But give up the principle, reject causality in the physical-ethical world, and the problem of Job the man and the book disappears. Where justice is possible, injustice is too. Where it is not, where the principle of retribution has no validity, there can be no injustice.¹⁸

The problem may indeed disappear from Tsevat's view. As he takes pains to say, for him Job is essentially a "theoretical treatise". His solution may well not suit the more practically minded reader. He criticises Fohrer for insufficient concern with theodicy in his examination of "the proper conduct of man in suffering".¹⁹ Conversely I would object that Tsevat is too little concerned with the human component. To tell Job simply that he should stop feeling pain because justice is no more than a human construct would not, in my view, make his problem disappear.

18. Tsevat, pp.97-98

19. Ibid, pp.95-96

Not only does the kind of meaning which is acceptable differ from person to person and religious viewpoint to religious viewpoint, but it evolves from epoch to epoch. Conducting a historical survey of interpretations, Nahum Glatzer writes:

In reviewing the major trends in the entire range of literature on the Book of Job, one cannot fail to notice that, with some notable exceptions, Jewish interpreters in the premodern period Judaized Job and Christian expositors Christianized him. Both sides, again with exceptions, avoided a direct confrontation with the text of the book, in order not to be exposed (or to expose the pious reader) to the bluntness of the hero's speeches and the shattering self-revelation of God in his answer to Job. The book's frame and folk tale offered an escape clause. By concentrating on the story of the patient, saintly Job, the reader could absorb the shock of the drama of the impatient, rebellious hero; he could "interpret" the latter in the light of the former.²⁰

Later, as "the established religions lost their all-embracing grip on the interpreter", Glatzer discerns an increased readiness to explore such texts as literature. Yet he finds preoccupations, causing "an adaptation of Job to (their) own thinking or needs". He sees hope for the future, however "more and more contemporary students ask the simple question: What does the book really say? They are prepared to approach the text with naked eye". I have doubts nonetheless about the new-found critical objectivity and its divergence from what he calls the premodern style. He gives no conclusive examples. Neither the sardonic scepticism of Frost's "A Masque of Reason", which he cites, nor Jung's delving down to deep-seated archetypes in *Answer to Job* could be described as naked of preconceptions, however revealing both may be. Perhaps we simply fail to notice the blinkers that match our own. What is significant about the interpretations Glatzer classes as modern is less their absence of individual perspective than their variety and distinctiveness.

The more I read, the more I realise how many writers have approached Job imaginatively and from how many perspectives. Some have produced responsive commentaries or critiques; I would place Gustavo Gutierrez's *On Job* in this category. Some create derivative creative works of art;

20. Glatzer, p.111

Archibald MacLeish's poetic drama, J.B. and Frosts's "A Masque of Reason" fall into this category with William Blake's illustrations for the book and interestingly, a number of science fiction epics. Still others make Job a basis for pastoral theology: among them, Jung's Answer to Job and Harold Kushner's popular When Bad Things Happen to Good People. Among all these, there is divergence of interpretations to the point of contradiction. Gutierrez locates Job's salvation in his identification with all oppressed people, for example, while D D Raphael sees him as a tragic hero, for whom by definition, there is no salvation. Frost's God is trapped in the process of becoming, while for Kushner, God is unchangeably loving but limited. MacLeish's focus is intensely personal and human, while for Arnold Toynbee, the story is an instance of the primal myth of cosmic conflict, moving between yin and yang in the creation process. Who is right? No one is, I suggest - or perhaps everyone is.

MAKING THE MEANING

When she heard that I was preparing this thesis, my friend Jean lent me an essay of hers to read, also on the Book of Job. She had written it a year or two previously, when her marriage and her career had only recently come to grief, despite her best attempts to live them well and sensitively. At age fifty-eight, she was having to begin life afresh in a strange city and, not coincidentally, to re-examine her faith in God. The essay was written for a course in Christian Knowledge which formed part of that re-examination. Reading it now, I realise that "essay" is the wrong word for it. "Meditation" is more apt, better still, "response". In its themes and, to an extent, in its form, it reflects the Biblical book. It uses narrative prose to set the scenes from Job's story and metaphor-rich poetry to express the feelings. The feelings, however, are not Job's but Jean's; her own pain at the devastation of her own life, her own need to question God and the faith in Him by which she had lived. Hers had been, as it is for many still, the faith from which Job started; faith in a moral universe, in accordance with which God acts toward us. Job's tale spoke to her condition - calamity, comforters and all - and gave her a vehicle to come to terms with it.

I believe every reader of the Book of Job is doing to some extent what Jean did. Their situation and their pain may not be as acute as hers, yet what draws readers again and again to this venerable tale is their own awareness

of life's injustice and the need to resolve for themselves the tension in Tsevat's eternal triangle. The stage setting comes from the book, but the motivation comes from the events of readers' own lives; and so, not surprisingly, do the answers.

Albert Cook explains how the vehicle of dramatic poetry makes this possible in his analysis of the Book of Job, together with The Song of Songs, as "Bible drama". These two books are unique within the Bible, he says, in offering the reader an entry. In other books, the teacher and the teaching are enclosed within the story; these Bible dramas open one wall to create a stage, and allow the entry of another character, the reader, and therefore a new lesson:

Any drama, to begin with, offers four possible sets of signifier-signified relationships: that (1) between the imagined scene and some actual scene; that (2) between the imagined group and their imagined scene; that (3) between the imagined group and the "audience" group, and finally that (4) between the audience group and their own actual scene. The complexities of the first three find their pay-off in the last, if the drama is handled well. If the drama is also scripture, the pay-off announces itself as of ultimate significance.²¹

In this case, relationship (1) exists between Job's dunghill and the landscape of misery on which dwells any human spirit in such tormenting circumstances; relationship (2) between Job and his companions and the reality of toppling assumptions to which they react; (3) between the characters of the book and any reader who seeks to puzzle out these perplexities, also between the Voice from the Whirlwind and the God in the reader's life. What Cook, with a certain lack of literary finesse, terms the "pay-off" comes as we use the light of the book to illuminate the landscape of our own lives and so achieve some larger sense of the relationship between ourselves and the God in whose world such suffering exists. As we read, the experience of our lives enters into the drama and enriches it; at the end, the drama of the book enters into our lives, as it has for the writers listed above. From Jung to Gutierrez, from Kushner to

21. Cook, p.10

MacLeish. They have all done to some extent what my friend Jean did; they have met the story of Job with their own awareness or experience of pain and injustice, and used his story to understand their own.

The variety of interpretations which has resulted, as generations of readers have entered into this process, does not indicate culpable subjectivity on their part. Rather, it deals with issues which, as Cook put it, are of ultimate significance to the human condition. He seems to say that the issues must be of ultimate significance because the book is scripture. I would suggest conversely that it is the ultimate significance of the issues and the power with which they are expressed which justify Job's inclusion in the Biblical canon.

JOB AND THE PRESENT DAY

"There lived in the Land of Uz ..." is the beginning of a legend. Whatever follows happened so long ago and far away that it could be any time and anywhere. We are free, as readers have always been, to make them our own time and place, and to colour in the outline of the scene with our own way of thinking. Indeed, Job's story is proving at least as applicable to our own turbulent time as to any preceding one. Except for William Blake's, all the interpretations I have cited belong to the twentieth century. This is not surprising in a century which has seen two world wars and knows the feasibility of nuclear and environmental destruction, and whose media give minute-by-minute accounts of human struggles worldwide. For all these raise fresh questions about human evil and human suffering. Nor is it surprising in a time of religious and philosophical pluralism, when, as Nahum Glatzer puts it, "the established religions (have) lost their all-embracing grip". Yet the question of undeserved suffering remains as real as ever; and, as Harold Kushner shows, answering it remains religion's chief significance for troubled people. This rabbi writes, "Virtually every meaningful conversation I have ever had with people on the subject of God and religion has either started with this question, or gotten around to it before long".²² And so this compelling story, designed, it seems deliberately, to transcend all boundaries of culture and attitude, continues to provide a framework for puzzling out the answers.

22. Kushner, p.14

In a century of widespread social concern, writers of note have used Job's story to challenge society. Job Huss, hero of H G Wells's *The Undying Fire*, for example, learns to respond with courageous living to a (1919) world without nineteenth century optimism. Although his solution to Job's problem is the personal one of regenerative love, Archibald MacLeish places his hero J.B. at the mercy of society. J.B. loses his family and property in a car crash, a rape murder and a nuclear attack. His unsuccessful comforters are a psychiatrist and a political activist as well as a priest. Gutierrez's *On Job*, a classic of liberation theology, sets the anguished hero to challenge the inequities of his own society and ours.

Perhaps most distinctive of our century, however is not this will to reform society so much as the sense of power to change the individual. Many reflective people today believe they can grow to understand the working of their own hearts and minds, making them work more effectively and wisely. And for those who are spiritually sensitive, this means a way to grow closer to God. Here, as in traditional theodicy, pain is often the impetus, when the subject suffers and the quality and freedom of life are diminished without obvious cause. Because the poetic dialogues reveal so much of the emotion underlying Job's experience, the Book lends itself admirably to use as a demonstration of the various psychotherapeutic techniques which aim to reach the root of human pain. The next three chapters of this thesis examine three such techniques via the medium of the Book of Job: (1) the medical model of pain as an illness, (2) that of pain as grief over loss and (3) the way of myth and archetype, revealing the common elements in all human experience.

Chapter 3

JOB'S ILLNESS AND ITS CURE

The troubled mind and spirit can produce as much pain as any physical illness. The burning itch of Job's boils provides a telling metaphor for the agony of his spirit and any such spirit, tormented by experiences with which it cannot deal. Viewing such pain as worthy and capable of treatment is an achievement of the twentieth century. The treatment which we now call psychotherapy originated in the 1880s, when Breuer developed his "talking cure", based on a recognition of the link between behavioural aberrations or physical symptoms and traumatic events in the patient's recent or distant past.²³ Although Breuer himself soon lost interest in the technique, his friend Freud took it up; and through him, it led to psychoanalysis and the many schools of psychotherapy which have developed from it. Because pain is the symptom, treatment of mental and spiritual disorders has mainly modelled itself on physical medicine: the sufferer being classed as "mentally ill", treated by a psychiatric doctor. Such a model is the subject of this first chapter. It is important to note that, as with any medical treatment, psychiatry works best when directed toward a person rather than a symptom, indeed, when it is an encounter between two whole people, as in the study examined below.

When patient meets psychiatrist, each as a whole individual, their encounter is quite unique. Yet it is also part of the human condition, and much can be learned by exploring that common human ground. Therapist and perhaps patient too may be enlightened by sight of the general to which their particular belongs. So they learn from case histories, sometimes generalised as theory. Normally, such insights come from actual cases, but not always. Indeed, it is such understanding that pastors are seeking as they search the Bible for examples of healing or models of the healer.

JOB AS A MODEL FOR TREATMENT

Psychiatrist Jack Kahn brings therapy and story together in this way in Job's Illness, shedding light on each from the other. In the process, he

23. Murray Parkes, pp.15ff

brings Job to life in all his forceful individuality - an individuality which may be overlooked when his story is read as a moral lesson. In several senses, the study is Kahn's life's work, inspired by insights from his early psychiatric training and published in the year he retired. This long gestation produced a comprehensive and thoughtful analysis, although possibly a somewhat dated one. It is also a life's work in expressing the integration of religious, professional and cultural influences on his own life, as he put it: "the converging of the Hebrew heritage which came in my childhood through my father ... with the general literary and scientific environment to which I was exposed in my adult life".²⁴ He also evinces a love of literature, describing how his fledgling interest in Job was fed by a production of J.B. Given these influences, his attraction to Job is hardly surprising; nor is the richness of allusion with which he treats his theme. He gives his rationale of the book in the following passage:

On several occasions it occurred to me to organise my ideas on the subject and use the Book of Job as an illustration of basic human problems which patients describe when being treated for psychiatric disorders. I continued to be impressed by the frequency with which the words that patients used resembled those of Job. It also became apparent that the expression of these ideas was an indication of some change in the patient's internal state - often for the better. What was being conveyed was a search for a new level of integration which, when achieved, seemed to be an improvement on the previous balance of mind which had been upset. Job himself seemed to represent the efforts of many present-day sufferers to reach levels of maturity as yet unattained.²⁵

Integration, his sign of maturity, is clearly a priority for Kahn, as appears from the variety of resources he brings together in the book. He chooses the New English Bible translation (wisely, in my view) for its clarity, but does so in the certainty that the cadences of the Authorised Version will reverberate in the reader's mind. He draws not only on MacLeish to enrich his work, but on Blake, Shakespeare and other creative writers. He is eclectic in his reference to schools of psychiatry, drawing upon the insights of Freud, Melanie Klein, Winnicott and Marion Milner at

24. Kahn, p.ix

25. Ibid, p.x

need. For he finds that "descriptions in the text transcend the boundaries of the different schools". Nor does he aim at a single diagnostic label for Job's condition. Indeed, he asserts that the reciprocal relationship of Job and his comforters may provide a cautionary lesson in the dangers of labelling as ill those who deviate from the current cultural norm. Finally, he is sensitive enough to the pain of the process not to prescribe Job as a model for every sufferer. That is, however preoccupied he is with the book's insights into human behaviour, he would not support Fohrer's view (cited in Tsevat) that it provides a definitive model for conduct in times of suffering. "A mental disorder can be a creative experience, (Kahn says) and it was through suffering that Job achieved his new level of integration. But for many people the suffering which is involved in mental disorder is too high a price for anything that is achieved". Job is Everyman in his suffering but a distinct personality in his response to it.

KAHN'S ANALYSIS

It is easy to imagine how so strong a troubled character might capture a psychiatrist's interest, particularly when that character is engaged in a process of maturation involving interaction which might be seen as therapy. Jack Kahn takes Job off the dunghill and into his consulting room to analyse the problem and the process. The result is immensely absorbing to read. The intricate workings of the psychiatrist's mind are wonderful to contemplate, while the problematic Job comes ever more to life, as Kahn ponders and probes the hypothetical underpinnings of his neurosis. This is a psychodynamic interpretation, to be set alongside studies concerned with theodicy. Kahn sets out to show how this particular patient participates in the process of his own cure.

Getting to know Job as an individual very soon has an unexpected effect, we encounter, chapter after chapter, the dogged, rigid, humourless, self-obsessed determination with which he protests his innocence and seeks out God. If we stop seeing Job as a paradigm or a hero and follow Dr Kahn in examining him as an individual, it is hard to ignore just how disagreeable and irritating such a personality can be. Acknowledging this, we may develop a sneaking sympathy with the Comforters in their growing impatience. Looking at the book through a psychiatrist's eyes and focussing on Job, the man, we recognise that the qualities listed above are not a necessary element in Everyman's journey but aspects of a particular

kind of character. It is an obsessive personality, bent wholly on its object, lacking the perspective which humour or hesitancy would give. But would a less self-centred person hold to innocence despite the evidence of esteemed friends and the world view he has heretofore shared with them? And would a less determined person succeed in thinking and doing the impossible: an audience with God? "The story of Job (as Kahn comments later) is one of maturation to levels which could only be attained after intense inner suffering". In his character, as in the anguish he expresses, we are given a hint of the price such growth exacts. Alastair Hunter shows how our growing impatience with Job becomes part of the pain of the story. If we acknowledge and experience that dislike, say Hunter, recognising how it alienates us from the sufferer, it brings home to us his utter aloneness. He is isolated even from us, his posterity. The same unbending nature which makes it possible for him to approach God, leaves him with no one to turn to except God.²⁷

In summary, Kahn's analysis is this: Job moves from a state of personal integrity based on obsessive adherence to law, through stages of disintegration, to reintegration on a more mature and autonomous level. His obsessional personality is ripe to be precipitated by adversity into obsessional neurosis; and so it is when Job suddenly loses his property (including his children!) With it go both the outward indication of his righteousness and his expectation of any future reward. It is the world view, which embodies both of these, whose loss causes him greatest pain, and his obsessive character shows itself through the dialogues and the Apologia in his determination to hold on to it. Rejecting the available medical diagnoses of "running sores" as anything from leprosy to scurvy to eczema, Kahn opts for a psychosomatic explanation. They are the bodily acknowledgement of attack, while the mind still represses awareness. The skin, boundary and barrier of individuality, has been breached; and the invasion must be acknowledged.

As the poetry begins, psychological symptoms appear and Kahn diagnoses them as depression in response to loss and paranoia. The paranoia results, Kahn explains in Freudian vein, as Job, still clinging to his old world view,

27. Hunter, pp.134-136

feels himself punished for some transgression by his superego, whose external representation is the Comforters. Referring to Melanie Klein, he calls this paranoia an indicator of a weak ego, not strong enough to stay with the potentially healing state of depression. Interestingly, this weakness is quite the opposite of the usual lay reading of Job's character. Whether he should be described as neurotic or psychotic at any moment depends on the weight given to his descriptions of persecution. If they are figurative - eg. if he means he feels as if torn apart by the Comforters' teeth (16:10), it is neurosis. If he means such expressions to be taken literally, he has lost hold of reality and slipped into psychosis.

It has been suggested that every human relationship is therapeutic for good or ill. What happens to Job next certainly is evidence for this proposition. For the hidebound Comforters, with their patent lack of the psychotherapeutic skills, and the bumptious Elihu help Job release his old world view and accept a new one. Kahn largely shares the general awareness of the Comforters' lack of sympathy once they break silence. They are poor counsellors. He then shows himself unusually perceptive in recognising the increasingly cantankerous quartet of Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Job for what it is. It is a therapy group, containing the bond of a common culture and the disruptive mutual hostility which group therapists know well how to use. It's only deviation from the norm is its lack of a therapist.

As the group dynamic weaves on, Job resists the classic "double bind" in which his companions try to ensnare him. The double bind logic says that God, who is just, punishes badness; Job, who has been punished, must therefore be bad; by insisting on his own goodness, he is denying God's justice and is therefore bad; in order to be good and deserve God's favour, he must acknowledge that he is bad and deserves punishment. Although, at first the double bind attack entrenches him further in assertions of his own perfection, he moves steadily nearer to rejecting altogether the judgemental world picture on which it is based. Along with it will go his paranoid desire to control God (the superego). In tracing this interaction, with the help of Freud and Melanie Klein, Kahn provides a more coherent analysis of those repetitive and highly rhetorical dialogues than many a commentator has achieved.

Elihu, in Kahn's analysis, is particularly facilitative of change. By his forceful demonstration that God's ways are beyond human comprehension, he

not only releases Job's loosening grip on his old theology but gives him nothing to put in its place. So Job becomes open and receptive to the therapeutic potential of his own unconscious, which he will shortly hear as God's voice in a tempest. And Elihu achieves more than this; he exercises a healing ministry. By placing all humanity together on a level far below God, he paves the way for reconciliation in the angry group of four. Further, by his assertion that the Almighty is impervious to human folly,

Your wickedness touches only men such as you are;

The right that you do affects none but mortal man.(35:8)

he alleviates any guilt Job may be repressing over his attacks on God, so that this relationship too can be healed. Kahn is unusual in his admiration for Elihu's rhetorical skill. Acknowledging that the young man sometimes slips back into the doctrine of "special relationships", he takes this as evidence of just how hard it is to escape it: "... he cannot entirely escape from traditional doctrine (neither will Job, nor will subsequent generations of men who try to rationalise their religion)".

Before his crisis the patient had an exaggerated sense of self-importance. As the Apologia shows, his position as "the greatest man in all the east" was essential to his self-image; more than that, he considered himself worthy to debate with and even to accuse God. As the illness progresses, his self-aggrandisement increases until it even overshadows the wisdom virtues by which his life has heretofore been governed. As Eliphaz points out, "why you even banish the fear of God from your mind, usurping the sole right to speak in his presence".(15:4) Now, in his encounter with the God of his unconscious, perspective shifts. He recognises that he and, by extension, all humanity are but a small part of a wonder-full creation. Yet he is a part and God's willingness to engage in dialogue with him acknowledges him to be so. There is a blessing implied, as when Jacob wrestled with the Jabbok.

Kahn sets this encounter in Job's own mind. The Almighty personifies Job's deep knowledge that there are elements of reality which are by nature beyond human understanding and control. This insight, he says, has been expressed often elsewhere in myths of the Promethian tradition. He overrides the long debate among commentators as to the best translation of Behemoth and Leviathan with another reference to myth. This time it is the mythic power which real creatures and events may carry. Animals of strength and dignity may come to represent the ultimate test for the

people who hunt them. He illustrates his point with a story by Laurens van der Post, *The Hunter and the Whale*. A better known example is *Moby Dick*, which curiously, he does not mention. Other animals acquire a deep psychological significance in this interpretation. Among them, the crocodile, associated with that wondrous mythical beast the dragon, represents the untamed and dynamic power of his unconscious which Job now acknowledges.

He spends little time on the Epilogue, although he does not seem to find it as incongruous as many do. On the psychodynamic level, it is appropriate for Job to have his possessions and position restored since the person who has undergone a transforming illness like Job's is not normally very different in the way she/he lives afterward. On the moral level, it is fitting that Job, who has learned to accept gratuitous adversity, should likewise learn to accept gratuitous benefits. The Lord takes away, and the Lord gives; blessed be the name of the Lord.

EVALUATION

Kahn has lifted Job off the page and into his consulting room, far away from the Land of Uz. In so doing, he has begun with the same premise that I have used in this thesis: that the Book of Job has something fresh to say to each generation and every discipline. In the light of this, one cannot object to his giving his psychiatric skills free reign (along with those of Freud, Klein, etc). Nevertheless, it seems important to distinguish among degrees and kinds of authenticity. Some of his interpolations are genuinely relevant to the text. I found his exposition of the double bind trap and his invitation to regard Job and his failed comforters together as a therapy group particularly illuminating. But others strike me as extraneous, for example the search for seeds of paranoia in the childhood of a character who has no childhood. Occasionally, his reign can be so excessively free as to threaten his own premise that Job's illness mirrors the psychiatric complaints he has encountered in his practice. For motives like the following to be realistically attributable to the Biblical Job, they must be very well repressed indeed.

In a particular family system, close family members, especially offspring, might well be considered as potential threats to the authority of the father. This threat may be a factor which the conscious faculty is unable to recognise, because the threat would elicit a desire to eliminate the source of danger. Job's over-

solicitude for the moral safety of his children could have been the counterpart of his wish to harm them. His sacrifices, which were intended for their benefit in relation to God, may also have been undertaken in an effort to avoid the effects of the hostile component of his own ambivalent feelings.²⁹

The text suggests rather that Job errs on the side of possessiveness. Viewing the children as part of his estate and of the external sign of his righteousness, he is unlikely to imagine them as sufficiently autonomous to threaten him.

The spectrum of interpretations that the book suggests to Kahn's psychiatrically trained mind seems to me to raise wider questions about assessing the validity of interpretations of so textually difficult a work as Job. In a situation like this where, as Kahn himself points out, every translation is an interpretation, can we be sure of how much we read from the text and how much we read into it? How much psychodynamic sensitivity can we assume in the astute author from twenty-five centuries ago? Let me cite an example where Kahn's reading seem rather nearer the mainstream than he himself thinks.

It is his diagnosis in Chapter 2 of the "premorbid" Job as a perfectionist, suffering from an obsessional neurosis. Certainly, "neurosis" belongs to twentieth century psychiatry, but what about "perfectionist"? Much of the ascribed motivation for it here stems from modern theory, as do undercurrents of symptomatology, which are not made explicit (eg. possible destructive and even criminal tendencies for which compulsive behaviour might be a compensation (p.20)). But does the writer of the Prologue not hint strongly at Job's perfectionism by showing him following an unfailing ritual observance as a safeguard against possible wrong doing, and giving this as the sole illustration Job's righteousness? And does Job's Apologia not reinforce this message by its long list of the wrongs he has not done? Perhaps not. Norman Habel's comprehensive commentary ³⁰ confirms Kahn's assertion that the Hebrew word translated as "blameless" in the NEB and

29. Ibid, pp.29-30

30. Habel, 1985, pp.86-87

"perfect" in the AV has connotations of wholeness and integration rather than perfectionism. Focussing on the stage-setting role of the Prologue, Habel shows how Job, the man without blemish, is drawn as a moral ideal, the hero of a legend. His fear of God and his face set against wrong doing make him a hero of the wisdom tradition. For Habel, there is perfection without Perfectionism.³¹

Mattiahu Tsevat, writing in the context of orthodox Judaism, offers a middle way, which seems to me the most satisfactory. He reads "premorbid" Job as a strict observer of the Jewish Law. In observing every jot and tittle of it, he shows himself to be a man of the letter rather than the spirit. Here is a time-honoured form of perfectionism, which is socially and religiously sanctioned, but which leaves no opening for the spirit of the Living God to enter the life of the observer. It needs overturning before he can "wake up" and become autonomous, ie. God-governed rather than rule-governed.³² So, when Kahn diagnoses as paranoid Job's conviction that God is persecuting him, the diagnosis has implications not only for Job but for an entire world view. Job's sense of persecution arises not from some personal mental aberration but from the religious teaching which governed him and his society.

SUMMATION

None of the negative criticisms offered above are meant to deny either the power or the value, of Job's Illness. Indeed, these are perhaps best seen in the thought the book provokes. In moving Job from ancient Uz, to a twentieth century consulting room, Kahn has achieved four important things. First, where his interpretation is close to the text, he helps illuminate and untangle some of its most intricate passages. Second, where he moves further away, he raises important questions about the boundaries of legitimate interpretation. Third, he provides the layperson with a lively demonstration of practical psychiatry at its most ingenious. And fourth, even when direct relevance to the text is in doubt, he offers insights into the real human situations which are reminiscent of Job's. They may well be our own situations, past, present or future, when we find ourselves in

31. Habel, 1985, pp.86-87

32 Tsevat, p.100

revolt against life's injustice; or they may belong to suffering people near us. The appeal of Job's Illness is the same that the Book of Job itself has had for centuries.

However we interpret his passage from old reality to new, it is worth remembering that Job works through his predicament alone. While there are friends to advise him, for better and for worse, he has no guide, not even God, for most of the journey. Job is less a victim of his situation than a worker with it; indeed, at each stage, a creator of it. Little as we may like Job, it is hard not to admire him for the self-willed determination with which he clings to his vision and finally lets go to accept a greater one.

Chapter 4

JOB IN MOURNING

Although Jack Kahn treats his Biblical text chapter by chapter, as a commentary would, *Job's Illness* ranges too wide to be assessed as textual criticism. It is rather an artist's impression of Job, needing evaluation in terms of its own internal unity and its psychiatric reference points. Colin Murray Parkes, a fellow psychiatrist, is in a good position to judge this demonstration of psychiatric technique. Reviewing the book soon after its publication,³³ he found much of interest and of practical use. Nevertheless, he sums up,

The book itself embodies the paradox that it illustrates; Kahn's weakness is Job's weakness. Kahn, like Job, is tied to ways of thinking which no longer fit the world he perceives. Kahn, like Job is compelled to attempt to force these perceptions into the Procrustean bed of his own preconceptions. Kahn, like Job, has difficulty in accepting that there are limits to his understanding and, like Job, he alternately bores and delights us.

What perturbs Parkes most about *Job's Illness* is its absorption with a medical model. Although Kahn stresses the creative potential of Job's condition, and although he concedes that mental illness may be another name for deviation from the cultural norm, it is clear from the title to the last page, that his book is dealing with a malady. Parkes, who specialises in bereavement therapy, prefers to see Job as the victim of severe but normal grief. Admittedly, Parkes has his own axe to grind. Writing his seminal book *Bereavement*, also published in 1975, he felt the need there to convince readers that grief was a condition to be taken seriously: a syndrome deserving time, attention and treatment. It is thanks in part to his campaign, and particularly to *Bereavement*, that the subject is taken so seriously today. His work has played an important part in the hospice movement and the establishment of such support organisations as Cruise. He might be forgiven for overstating his case in the review. Nevertheless,

33. Colin Murray Parkes, "Patient as Job - Smiling at Grief", *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 12.9.75, p.15

evaluated objectively, his diagnosis makes sound sense. For Job has lost his property, his children, his health and his relationship with God.

WORKING AT GRIEF

There is a sense in which grief is an illness of the mind. Parkes makes a case for this in *Bereavement*, urging the need for convalescence and care. It causes discomfort and disturbance of function, has specific symptoms, needs time and sometimes professional treatment, depending on its severity. There is social stigma attached to it; society treats the mourner like an invalid. He likens it to a physical injury, pointing out that it is sometimes called "a blow", and shows (via the reference to Breuer's "talking cure" cited in the last chapter) how mental and physical torment are often the results of traumatic experiences like loss of a loved one. It may lead to complications, perhaps other illnesses, even death. But given time, it may well end in greater strength (as indeed it does for Job), like a well-knitted broken bone. Grief, so defined, is an illness but no more abnormal an illness than influenza. Bereaved people rarely require psychiatric treatment. Even so, support is important, and "those who are in a position to meet these needs must expect to find the recipient of their help "defensive, sensitive, vulnerable and unreasonable" (p.13) - indeed, somewhat Job-like".

What Jack Kahn diagnoses as depression with components of anxiety and paranoia, Parkes, the reviewer, diagnoses more simply as the violent anger which is often a component of grief. It may be aimed at the person who is gone or of those who might have prevented the death. Often, it is directed at God, who should not have let the death happen. Kahn is aware of the symptoms of grief in Job's behaviour but, as Parkes points out, seems too attached to his more complicated symptomatology to be content with this as an explanation. Parkes draws a parallel in his review between Job's diatribes and *A Grief Observed*, the journal which C S Lewis kept in the weeks following his wife's death.³⁴ Each "is accusing God of becoming a 'cosmic sadist' and challenging him to justify his behaviour". I can see that Job shares other symptoms with Lewis. Significant among them are self-absorption (pervading all he says), mental disorganisation and mood

34. Lewis, pp.9-10, for example, and 35-36. Compare Job 10:8-22.

swings (from hopelessness to determination in Chapters 9 and 10),³⁵ physical disease (6:7; also perhaps the "running sores") and impatience with friends who "don't understand" (6:13-30; this first response is surely disproportionate to anything the Comforters have done so far). All these are accepted symptoms of normal grief. Their severity in Job, seen as a model of grieving, may be attributed to the undeniable strength of his character and the rhetorical style of the poem.

Freud coined the term "grief work" to emphasize the psychological importance of grieving. The pain is not a pitfall or a sign of weakness; it is a necessary part of the process. In fact, complications requiring psychiatric intervention may well occur if the normal process is avoided or its symptoms are suppressed. Parkes and other therapists have enumerated the tasks of normal grief work with only minor differences.³⁶ All the lists include recognition of the loss, experience of the pain of loss and adjustment to an environment from which the person who has died is missing. It is certainly possible to fit Job into this pattern, if for the dead person, we substitute all that has heretofore given meaning to his life. In particular, the need to adjust to a new world makes some sense of that problematic prose ending to his story.

Parkes interpretation is altogether more straightforward if less ingenious than Kahn's. And because most readers can identify more easily with Job, the mourner, than with Job, the paranoid neurotic, it provides a more generally helpful model. It seems to me, however, that there is an explanation which fits Job's case even better than bereavement. Job is a man who has lost much - not only family, property, health and position, but his very sense of self. The whole foundation of his life - his relationship with God and with his society - has disintegrated. As the Prologue and his Apologia both demonstrate, there is nothing else in his life. He has lost more than some precious part of his life; all of life is gone, as he understood it. So the more useful comparison is not with grieving but with dying. The Book of Job recounts the death of "the greatest man in all the east", along with the world view that sustained

35. These are single examples of recurrent themes in Job

36. Murray Parkes, pp.212-213

him. He has to die as the blameless and upright man in order to be born again onto a new plane, where these concepts become irrelevant and therefore transformed.

THE DEATH OF JOB

Much as Parkes recognised the need to help mourners by identifying grieving as a normal and therapeutic process and by outlining its stages, an American colleague, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross saw the need of people with terminal illnesses to have their feelings understood and respected, so that the importance which hospital staff gave to keeping them alive should not interfere with the peace and dignity of their dying. Interviews with terminal patients helped her identify what had to be gone through in facing death. As she explains in the Preface to the book which resulted, *On Death and Dying*,³⁷

We have asked (the patient) to be our teacher so that we may learn more about the final stages of life with all its anxieties, fears and hopes.

The pattern she goes on to describe varied in practice; a given patient might repeat earlier stages or become "stuck" in one, since at each step into death, the will to live pulls back. Sometimes, two states of mind would co-exist. Basically, however, it is: (1) denial - "this can't be happening to me", (2) anger - "why me?", (3) bargaining - "to me, but not yet", (4) depression - "this dreadful thing really is happening to me", and (5) acceptance, when the passage from life to death begins. In most, a sixth state, hope, pervades all the rest, not to be confused with denial. Usually, it meant expecting a last-minute reprieve, a miracle drug or operation. In Job, it is the reiterated expectation of a Vindicator. Its purpose in both cases, is to give meaning to the suffering.

Of course the experiences of a fictional character compelled to re-evaluate his life cannot be equated with those of the dying patients whom Kubler-Ross interviewed. Yet the two have sufficient in common, I believe, to illuminate each other. The parallels are highlighted by the coincidence that Kubler-Ross, like the Biblical author, builds her study around

37. Kubler-Ross, pp.2ff

dialogues, several of which are transcribed in her book. They are at least as revealing as Job's albeit much gentler in tone. In particular, her study makes sense of Job's anger and isolation. Our unconscious, as she explains, cannot imagine its own extinction. It cannot imagine death, only being killed.³⁸ Hence the emotions in Job which Jack Kahn diagnoses as paranoia.

Death is both terrible and unthinkable. We deny it can happen to us even when it clearly is happening. So, Job insists that the God around whom he has built his life can be brought to account, in the face of all the facts. Then, we challenge it, courting danger, as when Job dares to challenge God. The process of dying is a detachment from the concerns and assumptions of the world. Job, like all who die, must enter the unimaginable passage alone. Kubler-Ross begins her book with a prayer by Rabindranath Tagore which is surely suitable for Job, as he relentlessly pursues his destiny:

Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless in
facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain but for the heart to
conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield but to my own
strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved but hope for the patience
to win my freedom.

Grant that I may not be a coward, feeling your mercy in my success
alone, but let me find the grasp of your hand in my failure.

("Fruit-Gathering")

It would be immensely satisfying to the writer of a thesis to be able now to trace Job's ordered progress through the stages of premorbid grief. The poet is too skilled, however, and the poetry too realistic to permit this. Like the hospital patients, Job moves back and forth among the stages, combining them, and returning again and again to the enraged protesting agony which is so characteristic of his particular obsessional personality. Nevertheless, he does exhibit all the designated signs and symptoms.

38. Kubler-Ross, pp.2ff

When disaster strikes him at the beginning of the book, announcing the end of his ordered world, his initial response is denial. God has acted in a completely arbitrary way, yet Job responds as if this were not so. He says the fitting words and begins the mourning rites, since after all, ritual is his accustomed way of fending off frightening eventualities. Ironically, his patient utterance is to prove truer than he knows:

Naked I came from the womb,

Naked I shall return from whence I came.

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away

Blessed by the name of the Lord.

(1:21)

His wife, who sees ahead more clearly than he, urges him to let go his obsolete integrity and die to the mass that encompassed it. but he prefers to reject her advice and her self, consigning her to the undifferentiated crowd of "any wicked fool of a woman". Apparently, the truth dawns upon him during his long silence; for at the end, he is in a despairing rage, although still trying to deny the pain ahead by obliterating his own existence. The dying person's anger may be aimed at people (eg. doctors) who might have prevented the catastrophe and/or at God, who should have prevented it. Job rages alternately at God and at the Comforters, whose every word reminds him that he no longer belongs in their world. He bargains with God too in his repeated demands for a fair trial before a deity who is patently not fair. His Apologia looks back with final desperate longing to the life he is leaving. Admittedly, it stretches the textual evidence; but depression too may be found in the poem in Job's failure to respond to Elihu, who has at last brought his situation home to him. Certainly, that silence marks an opening to what is to follow, as Kubler-Ross explains depression is a preparation for the acceptance of death. Finally, acceptance, comes as he acknowledges the God-given reality now before him and makes the transition into it.

THE FEAR OF DEATH

If Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's model of death and dying sheds light on the Book of Job, making the motivation behind the poetry more authentic, Job also has a message for Kubler-Ross's intended audience: those who care for dying patients. Who are the Job's Comforters of those dying from cancer and other terminal illnesses? In Kubler-Ross's words, those who are too busy saving a life to consider the person. The apparatus of medical technology

gets in the way of a genuine relationship, just as the apparatus of the wisdom school keeps the Comforters from seeing the real Job.

And the two systems are used as barriers for much the same reason. Reading the transcribed interviews with patients in *On Death and Dying*, it is hard not to share some of the dread the staff must have felt when confronted by unconquerable death. Sensing this, one begins to understand how they, like Job's friends, use a system as a barrier against what frightens them. In her chapter on "Reactions to the Seminar", Kubler-Ross describes how the higher ranking staff (with more career and ego investment in a life-saving methodology) behaved proportionately more defensively toward those near death. Consultants hid behind authority, nurses behind busyness, chaplains behind the Bible and prayer book. In contrast, medical students, less well defended, often needed several attempts before they could sit through an entire interview. Remembering this dread may give the reader more sympathy with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, while the expressiveness of their Comforters' poetry helps clarify how frightening the encounter with death may be to those who stand nearest to it. And the Book of Job sheds further light on this human interaction. Through explicit statements and similarities in their rhetorical styles, it reminds its readers repeatedly that Job and his friends share an identical wisdom school lineage:

Think how once you encouraged those who faltered
how you braced feeble arms,
how a word from you upheld the stumblers,
put strength into weak knees (Eliphaz 4:3-4)#

It is just this world view which is doomed to die within the terms of the poem. In real life, the common ground between doctor and patient is their mortality. No wonder, healers quail when faced at once with their own death and the defeat of their skill.

Such a reaction is peculiar to neither wizards nor wisdom school sages. It is a tragic component of the human condition. Daunted by death, most people spend most of their lives avoiding looking at it. Yet without a sense of death, there can be no sense of the shape of a life, any more than one can set out to decorate a room with no idea of one of its walls. The programme of interviews which led to *On Death and Dying* began with a request for help from four theology students at the nearby University of Chicago. Their class had been asked to undertake projects on a crisis in

human life, and these four had concluded that death is the greatest crisis of all. Did they know, I wonder, about the Chinese character for "crisis"? It is a configuration of the two characters meaning "disaster" and "opportunity". The disaster component is obvious. What opportunity does terminal illness offer the sufferer? Quite simply, the opportunity to die well; to round out a life by giving it meaning and shape. Not that many manage as well as Job, who gives his own eulogy (Chs. 29-31), and then delivers his old self wholly to annihilation:

I know that thou canst do all things
and that no purpose is beyond thee.
But I have spoken of great things which I have not understood,
things too wonderful for me to know.
I know of thee then only by report,
but now I see thee with my own eyes.
Therefore I melt away;
I repent in dust and ashes. (42:1-6)

An untreatable illness forces the patient to confront the unimaginable and gives times for a coming to terms. Hospital staff and family who deny the approach of death for whatever reason, are as detrimental to the process as Job's Comforters, being similarly trapped in inappropriate ways of thinking. By contrast, the quiet acknowledgement of mortality and the simple listening offered by Kubler-Ross and her team clearly did much to help the patients articulate the meaning in their own lives. This is shown happening literally in her opening account of a paralysed patient, dependent on a respirator. He was totally speechless until his consultant's real wish to know his feelings led to the idea of depressing the respirator, and so allowing him a few words at a time. Even the little he could say then, genuinely heard, made his condition bearable to him. Further accounts show the same process, albeit less graphically. Repeatedly, the opportunity to speak of death enables patients to reflect on their lives and then let go of them, until, like Job, they are ready to stand naked before their God.

Chapter 5

ARCHETYPE AND MYTH IN THE BOOK OF JOB

THE POWER OF MYTH

As I suggested in Chapter 1, it makes perfect sense, and indeed can be helpful, to interpret the action of the Book of Job as taking place inside one head. The voices in the poem - Job's own, his wife's, his three friends', Elihu's and God's - are then aspects of one personality, at war with itself. Such a battle has gone on in many a human mind when calamity has struck, unexpected and apparently undeserved. The "stages" of grief which Colin Murray Parkes and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross describe are examples of outward signs of such inner struggles. It helps make such inner turmoil comprehensible to the sufferer and communicable to others if it is described in outward terms: as someone covered in sores, crouching among the ashes, for example, arguing with friends who seek unhelpfully to help him. Or it may be a journey. Job never moves from those ashes; yet there is a sense of movement toward enlightenment in the story, which can be expressed in physical terms: upward and outward, from a black pit of despair, to a debating chamber, to a public place from which Apologia is delivered, to a high place, where God spreads out the panorama of creation; then a descent to the everyday world which is recreated in the Epilogue.

Like the attempt to make sense of undeserved pain, the struggles and other learning experiences of life are each quite unique to the life in which they occur. Yet such experiences come to all human beings and have done throughout human history. Consequently, when such experiences are expressed in outward images, they may grasp the imaginations and emotions of others, reflecting their own inner lives, giving them shape and dignity. The author of the Book of Job was doing just this, perhaps beginning with some painful event in his own life. Some such experiences are so widely shared that they take on a life of their own as myths. It is unfortunate that myth has come to be mis-defined as a tall tale, for a myth is true in a sense that transcends historicity. Whether or not the events it describes have occurred as they are recounted, the relevance and power of a myth lie in the fact that it proves true to life after human life.

Joseph Campbell taught courses in mythology over many years at Sarah Lawrence College in the United States. Shortly before his death,

television interviews with him were published as *The Power of Myth*. He explains the appeal of myths here:

Living a human life in New York City or living a human life in caves, you go through the same stages of childhood, coming to sexual maturity, transformation of the dependency of childhood into the responsibility of manhood or womanhood, marriage, then failure of the body, gradual loss of its powers and death. You have the same body, the same bodily experiences, and so you respond to the same images. For example, a constant image is the conflict of the eagle and the serpent. The eagle in spiritual flight, the serpent bound to the earth - isn't that conflict something we've all experienced? And then, when the two amalgamate, we get the wonderful dragon, a serpent with wings. All over the earth, people recognise these images.... It's as though the same play were taken from one place to another, and in each place the local players put on local costumes and enact the same old play.

Later, he continues,

The myths help you to read the messages (that life) has for you. They tell you the typical probabilities..... One thing that comes out in myth, for example, is that at the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation. The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. In the dark moment comes the light.³⁹

Here, surely, is the abyss of despair which Job describes so graphically in Chapter 3 and returns to in the whirlpool circles of his subsequent rage: "a land of deep darkness, dark upon dark". Once he is ready, Job finds the light there which lets him see himself and his God clearly for the first time. Fully to understand his experience, we must be prepared to enter imaginatively into the myth and probe our own dark places.

The Book of Job as a whole has such mythic power. Indeed, its popularity as a subject of study derives from this quality. If one hypothesizes that the prose framework long predates the poetry, there are two myths, describing two resolutions of the tension created in us by life's injustice. The prose tale provides a venerable model for facing affliction

39. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.39

while the poetry represents a radical attempt to come to terms with injustice by individuals whose reality the old tale no longer mirrors.

THE ROLE OF ARCHETYPES

As Campbell illustrates, similar images embodied in similar myths have arisen independently around the world. It may be that the elements of them are already shared in a common level of mind or spirit. The psychoanalyst Carl Jung called it a collective unconscious and based his system of therapy in part on its workings. Jung called the common images archetypes. The same images appear, apparently quite spontaneously, in the dreams and imaginings of all sorts and conditions of people. With many other therapists, Jung could testify that interpretation of them and the dream scenarios in which they are found can often produce a key to a tangle in the dreamer's life.

The archetypes are forms only, according to Jung: for example, the hero or the crone. They transcend cultural divides and acquire their content, colour and context as they appear in the stories of myths or dreams. In the passage from Jung quoted below, Anthony Storr uses the example of the hero archetype to explain this relationship between archetype and myth. He does this with admirable clarity although, I fear, with a certain nationalist bias. The hero myth, he begins, may be seen a metaphor for the progress from infancy to maturity.

Although the basic essentials of the progress are held in common by all mankind, since every child is born of a mother and has to grow up, attain independence and win a mate, yet the details of such a progress will vary from culture to culture. Thus, the English would tend to portray the hero as controlled, courteous, reluctant to show emotion, honest and straightforward: a "gentleman" in fact, or a "parfit gentil knyght". A Greek hero, on the other hand, might be painted as being much cleverer, a trickster, who would not shun deceit, would use guile to defeat his enemies, and who would not necessarily disdain displays of emotion when the situation warranted it. Odysseus is just as brave as any English Galahad; but Homer describes him as "the man of many wiles". It is therefore as if there was some kind of flexible mould underlying the idea of the hero, which could not be clearly seen until a culture had filled it with a myth, and therefore to some extent

rigidified it by defining it, but which itself was indefinable.⁴⁰

Jung differed from contemporary analysts Klein and Freud in his theories of both the generation of archetypes and their integration. For Kleinians, according to Storr,⁴¹ they derive from actual infant experience, while in Jung's theory, they emanate from the collective unconscious. For Kleinians, then, they are integrated through experience, as one succeeds in making satisfying emotional relationships, while in the Jungian view, they find expression in religion and shared myth. I see no reason why the explanations for integration should not exist side by side, given that growth of personality and, with it, the ability to form satisfying relationships are continuing processes. At any stage, a calamity or some more positive but equally new experience may challenge the individual to grow or to regress. Then, the person will draw once more on the insights of myth and religion, as troubled and mystified people do on the Book of Job. Jung himself pointed out, particularly in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, that our own age is one of the few in which the human need for religion is not generally acknowledged. He sees many people suffering consequently from a sense of futility and meaninglessness of life.⁴¹

JUNG'S ANSWER TO JOB

Although belonging to no particular denomination, Jung himself was deeply religious from childhood and always alive to the power of Christian imagery. Anthony Stevens cites two televised interviews where Jung declared, "I do not take (God's) existence on belief - I know that He exists". "This conviction" continues Stevens, "must have grown out of his own primary religious experiences as a boy, and the nature of God - especially His moral nature - remained a central preoccupation to the end of Jung's life".⁴² In 1952, he turned to the Book of Job and to its exposition of the archetype of deity to explain the problem of suffering: in the words of his title, to give an Answer to Job.

40. Storr, Jung, pp.39-40

41. Ibid, 44-47

42. Stevens, p.249

He begins with an unhesitating, angry leap to the hero's defence. Indeed, he finds Job a considerably more mature character than God, and can not but sympathize with his "canny" decision to prostrate himself before this bully (this is how Jung reads 42:1-6) rather than invite more abuse. God, being omnipotent, is a figure of cosmic passions. Tracing his character through the Old Testament, Jung finds him capable of immense love but also immense anger and a vast need for adoration, of whose consequences he is unaware. Hence, the wisdom of Job's final response.

Within the Jungian system, as for Jack Kahn, the goal of personal growth is integration of a divided self; and on the cosmic level, he discerns a disunity in the Godhead. In particular, this is a lack of individuation, or self-awareness. Alienated from his anima, or feminine principle, Wisdom, Yahweh lacks the ability to reflect on his own processes and may rain destruction unheedingly on the Jobs of creation. Orthodox Christianity aims to resolve the problem by further dividing the Creative Power: an unsatisfactory answer from Jung. Storr supports Stevens's assertion that the problem of evil was a lifelong concern, adding that Jung had rejected the traditional Christian view of God as dualistic, in separating the evil from a wholly good God and embodying it in a Devil.⁴³

Jung sets out to heal the divisions. Indeed, the healing has already begun, for Yahweh has found a second anima in Mary, and begotten Christ, the human and therefore self-aware aspect of God. There is more to do, however; it is for humanity as a whole to become the self-consciousness of God. In his closing chapters Jung explains the psychological need for the New Testament to end with the Book of Revelation. Everywhere else, the loving aspect of God has been presented; a reminder is needed that God is also fearful. Jung found Revelation terrifyingly evocative of nuclear holocaust. Human consciousness is needed, he urged, to turn God's power away from this destruction, in a creative direction.

EVALUATION

Aware that, in re-evaluating the data of religion - particularly the "archetype of deity", he was treading on sensitive ground, he prefaced the

43. Storr, Jung: Selected Writings, p.299

book with a lengthy "Lectori Benvolio". Here he went to some pains to distinguish between the data of belief and those of science. This attempt to ward off attack from offended theologians apparently failed, however. He writes sadly in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*,

My Answer to Job was meant to be no more than the utterance of a single individual, who hopes and expects to arouse some thoughtfulness in his public. I was far from wanting to enunciate a metaphysical truth. Yet the theologians tax me with that very thing, because theological thinkers are so used to dealing with eternal truths that they know no other kinds.⁴⁴

I wonder if Jung saw the real reason for the antipathy. Granted, his Answer challenges much mainstream Christian thought. On the other hand, neither my own theology nor my Christology is threatened by the book; and there is much in it to attract me, from its celebration of the feminine principle to its concern for world peace. Yet I find myself out of sympathy with the book, and interestingly, in much the same ways that one grows irritated with the character Job. Jung's passionately angry tone is reminiscent of Job's (Jung described the book, while writing it, as "pure poison")⁴⁵ as is his undisciplined style.

Further, his Yahweh reminds me of another archetype than deity; the father. In Storr's summary, the father archetype represents on one hand, the suppression of all instincts/the sublime God; on the other, the devil/unbridled sexual lust. Jung's own father, a preacher, infuriated Jung in childhood with sermons about an all-loving God. His own young experience contained a different style of God, offering a different grace. "None of you know anything about that", he reports wanting to say to his elders. "You don't know that God wants to force me to do wrong, that He forces me to think abominations in order to experience His grace".⁴⁶ His father's determined attempts to live devoutly later led to strain in the marriage, affecting the mother with whom Jung identified, and finally to the collapse of the father's faith. The accounts I have read provide no

44. Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, pp.243-244

45. Storr, *Jung: Selected Writings*, p.309

46. Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, p.59

evidence that Jung had worked through his feelings about his father previously; it may well be that *Answer to Job* gave him the opportunity. It is significant that he was propelled toward writing the book by two dreams, both depicting a return to his father's house. His otherwise exhaustive analysis of them omits to mention this coincidence. Finally, he reports that, having long resisted the project, he wrote the book without revision in the throes of an illness (he does not mention boils). When he finished the book the (psychosomatic?) illness ended.

May Jung have been guilty of the very error of which he accuses God: blindness to his own purposes? If so, it is neither his righteous indignation which initially alienates readers and inclines them to find fault, nor his radical theology; it is the unacknowledged anger of a Job-like author in revolt against a father God. This, I suspect, is what makes *Answer to Job* a fascinating but ultimately unsatisfactory book.

JOB, THE HERO

However much we might prefer to change God (it was Job's preference as well as Jung's), it is Job who changes, and Job who must be worked with when his story is used to find the meaning of suffering. There is an archetype of which he is an admirably apt expression: the hero. The hero is probably the most popular archetype of all, playing a part in the myths of ancient legend, religion and modern society. Heroes are usually male; and it is significant that, as the women's movement develops, a chief task is to find its own female heroes. None of this is surprising since we all engage in a hero's adventure at every stage of life from birth. Psychoanalyst Otto Rank has shown how significant to every culture is the myth of the birth of its hero,⁴⁷ be it Hercules, Jesus or Abraham Lincoln. The adventures continue through puberty, marriage, the start of a career, retirement, to death, and are marked at every stage - to some extent even in our secularized society with appropriate rites.

I realise that, as a parish minister, I undertake a weekly hero's journey. I leave the congregation each Sunday with a theme for the next Sunday's service, something the members need to know. I spend the week in realms of

47. Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero"

reading and meditation, and return the next Sunday with a message for them. In essence, this is the hero's journey. He leaves the community, by choice or compulsion, and travels through dangerous, other worldly places, which often include an underworld (death). Adventures test both strength and virtue, until finally, often in a high place, he receives a treasure, which he brings back to the community: something they have lost or something quite new which they need to enter a new era.

Each new stage in a human life is such an adventure; the dangers written into every hero myth indicate how daunting these adventures are. It is not surprising that we chose heroes for models at every stage. Joseph Campbell says,

We have not even to risk the adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us. The labyrinth is thoroughly known. We have only to follow the thread of the hero path, and where we had thought to find abomination, we shall find a god. And where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves. Where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the centre of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world.⁴⁸

Jesus is a prime instance of such a hero, both bringing the gift and offering the companionship.

Job is another expression of this archetype. In one sense, he has no choice about his journey; he is thrust into it by God's whim, and goes resisting. Yet he does choose it, at the point when he breaks with the patient self, which fits into society as it is, and enters the unknown. The move from prose to poetry marks a change of worlds; and, as I suggested above, although Job does not actually move from his ash heap, there is the sense of a hero's journey throughout the rest of the book.

In an earlier work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell explains how hero myths grow with the cultures that generate them; Job's, he suggests, is quite sophisticated. The contests are verbal rather than physical, and the underworld is much nearer to the one actual heroes endure; the black

48. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.123

pit of Job's despair. Yet in many ways the tale is classic, with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar playing obstacles to the journey - whether giants to bar the way or sirens to seduce him from it - and Elihu as the fool, a classic variant on the crone or Beatrice figure, pointing the way to the heights of revelation. His insight is half concealed by inflated bombast, underlined by his own references to his distended belly. He is unworthy himself of the apotheosis, unable to communicate it clearly; but his wise folly opens the way and urges the hero through it.

Campbell classifies Job's story among myths of initiation into a new life, and sets it alongside Phaeton's ride and the crucifixion of Jesus as a rite of atonement, at-one-ment, with the father.⁴⁹ He shows himself more aware of the link between this angry deity and an angry parent that Jung apparently was:

The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being.⁵⁰

Job goes tempestuously through just this process, until he confronts "the majesty of Being". There, he does apparently find validation for his own suffering, if not that of the cosmos. He fails as a hero, however, in that he brings nothing back to the world. Whatever he learns remains confidential between him and the Almighty. Indeed, the dissatisfaction which so many readers feel with the ending suggests that he does not return at all. It can be argued that the real story ends with the poetry, as he simply "melts away". It is as though, as Campbell suggests, Jesus had chosen to remain in the desert or on the Mount of Transfiguration. One may speculate that Job returned home sufficiently changed to communicate his truth simply by his bearing, or that the community was too entrenched in the old ways to register his message. Both are possibilities for the classic hero myth, although, in the latter case, the hero would not normally be able to remain. We can only surmise; there is no evidence in the poem. Yet, as I have been suggesting, this very flaw in the hero story of Job gives it appeal by inviting us in to find our own answers.

49. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, pp.126-148

50. *Ibid*, p.147

And this may be a more heroic quest than we realise. Both Jung and Campbell view the twentieth century as an age sadly alienated from its roots in religion and myth and therefore from its sense of meaning in life. As Campbell's interviewer, Bill Moyers, puts it "We are in trouble now because we are in between stories".⁵¹ Campbell, however, is hopeful that "there is an old story that is still good, and that is the story of the spiritual quest". That quest to find the meaning society has lost is Job's quest. If Buber's dating is correct, the Book was written in another such transitional time. May Job not be a hero crafted specially for such times? This would explain his popularity now. His open-ended story actively enables the modern reader to engage in the quest to find the vision this secular century has lost.

51. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, p.130

Chapter 6

A PERSONAL READING

Having examined so many contemporary interpretations of Job, let me end with my own.

Looking back over the fifteen years since I "discovered" the Book Of Job, I find that my own reading has changed. True to my theory about the open-endedness of the text, it has changed in ways that reflect my life situations. At first, I shared something of John Ferguson's frustration. the ending was no ending at all; God was browbeating Job rather than answering him. All my sympathy was with Job's courageous struggle against the inevitable: the undeniable but unacceptable unfairness of life and the oppressive attempts of authority (as personified by the Comforters) to enforce some official doctrine, at odds with experience. Of course, these concepts are genuinely present in the Book of Job. I gave them priority, however because of their importance to my own life then. It was a time when I expected to find the answers to life's problems in books; always, the next volume of wise words would have the answer. Also, I was in revolt then against the Father God, not quite wanting to let go of him, but insisting that he change, and make the world a fair and loving place.

Later, I read Job's story as a lesson in personal integrity. God does have a message for Job after all, I concluded, a message about maturity. The panorama of creation which God shows Job, with life and death intermixed, has nothing to do with rewards and punishments, little to do with human ideas of predictability and common sense; yet, in the face of it all, Job is abjured to "brace yourself and stand up like a man", to engage in dialogue with the source of it all: "I will ask questions and you shall answer". (40:7) The moral is that there is no reward to be expected for right action. Virtue is its own reward; the life of integrity is its own justification. We live lives of integrity because God asks it and because it is part of the human nature God has given us. This reading is substantiated in the text by the failure of the Comforters' arguments to convince, the power of God's arguments and Job's triumph in the Epilogue. But again, the priority I gave to these elements resulted from my other priorities at the time. It was a period of personal isolation. My

marriage was coming to an end, and I had come to minister to a congregation with (I was discovering) a well-established pattern of attacking its minister. The approbation I needed was no longer coming from where I was used to expect it, and I was learning to stand alone. I shared Job's anger, and I found the answer I needed in his resolution.

Now, my priorities have changed again. Increasingly in recent years, I have come to focus on the importance of loving relationships as the means to personal and spiritual growth. In my church ministry, in the counselling I do, in my work for the Peace Movement and in personal contact, my aim is to create accepting and facilitative relationships which encourage such growth. As I do so, I recognise how much in human defensiveness and the belief systems it has created militate against this end. So, as I turn again to the Book of Job, it does not surprise me to find myself reading it as a story of therapeutic relationships. Again, the elements of such an interpretation are genuinely available in the text; Job's relationships with God and with his fellow human beings change radically in this course of the book. But I suspect I find "the meaning" of the book in them rather than in other strands because it is the meaning I presently need to find.

JOB BEFORE

Before educative disaster strikes him, Job is caught in rigid relationships, based on fear and obedience to the letter of the law. As we are told in verse 1 fear of the Lord is at the heart of his life, admittedly, an estimable emotion in the wisdom-oriented context of his society. As the Book of Job itself confirms, "The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to turn from evil is understanding". (28:28) But it leads to separation and ritualised behaviour. Indeed, the sole religious observance attributed to the old Job is an obsessive one, based on fear, and it is the only illustration of his relationship with his children:

....then, when a round of feasts was finished Job sent for his children and sanctified them, rising early in the morning and sacrificing a whole-offering for each of them; for he thought that they might somehow have sinned against God and committed blasphemy in their hearts. This he always did.

(1:5)

Job may not live his obsessively obedient life in order to prosper; but he expects prosperity to result. In his popular pastoral study, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Harold Kushner shows how such an attitude inhibits right relationship by turning the living God into a mechanism:

God may choose to be fair and give a person what he deserves, punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous. But can we say logically that an all-powerful God must be fair? Would he still be all-powerful if we, by living virtuous lives, could compel Him to reward us? Or would He then be reduced to a kind of cosmic vending machine..... An ancient sage is said to have rejoiced at the world's injustice, saying, "Now I can do God's will out of love for him and not out of self-interest".⁵²

In Kushner's view, the "problem" with such an answer is that "it tries to promote justice and fairness and at the same time tries to celebrate God for being so great that He is beyond the limitations of justice and fairness". I think he misses the point here. Justice and fairness are seen to be worthy qualities, and Job's God does prove to be far beyond justice and any other such human constructs. What needs to change is the motive for practising justice and serving God.

As his *Apologia* (chapters 29-31) shows, this Job has needed to play God to the people around him. The attractiveness of his old way of life for himself and society is described in images of salvation, safety and abundance:

If I could only go back to the old days,
to the time when God was watching over me,
when his lamp shone above my head,
and by its light I walked through the darkness.
....when my path flowed with milk
and the rocks streamed oil. (20:2-3,6)

Whoever heard of me spoke in my favour,
and those who saw me bore witness to my merit,
how I saved the poor man when he called for help

52. Kushner, p.48

and the orphan who had no protector.
The man threatened with crime blessed me
and I made the widow's heart sing for joy. (29:11-13)

Yet his prime motive was always fear:
But the terror of God was heavy upon me
and for fear of his majesty I could do none
of these things (31:23)

There is something artificial about such virtue. Righteousness which can be slipped on like a garment (29:14) can be taken off again. Chapter 29, verses 7-10 and 21-25, shows the limits of any relationship with an elder statesman who bestowed bounties but kept his distance. "Like a king encamped with his troops", he plans their course, maintaining distance and discipline within the relationship, in the face of an inimical surrounding universe. There is no room for disinterested love to enter his fixed relationship with either other people or God.

JOB IN PROCESS

The relationship depicted in the dialogues between Job and his putative comforters is also less than satisfactory. Indeed, by the end of their dialogues, it is doubtful whether they and he can see each other as real persons at all. Nor is this surprising since they are facing in such different directions. For each of them, the other is an item on a personal agenda of overriding importance. Job wants sense to be made of his experience, sense that takes the pain away; he will hear nothing else. His response to all the well-marshalled words of comfort in Eliphaz's opening speech is typical. Eliphaz might as well have kept silence.

O that the grounds for my resentment might be weighed,
and my misfortunes set with them on the scales!
For they would outweigh the sands of the sea; (3:2-3a)

The three friends, for their part, are intent on defending their treasured doctrine of retributive justice. Once it is apparent that he rejects its implications, their course is clear. They go even to the lengths of character assassination in its defence. Their later descriptions of him (eg. Eliphaz's in Chapter 22) are in complete contrast to his own in the

Apologia. And the latter must be essentially valid since, without Job's righteousness, the poem loses its point. Nevertheless, despite their patent lack of empathy, the Comforters facilitate an enormous change in Job: his movement from the pit of despair to visionary heights. For he cannot remain in this human relationship without sacrificing his all-important integrity; he can only turn to God.

With health, possessions and reputation gone, only these two things remain to give Job's life meaning: belief in his own integrity and God. Punished, persecuted and even ignored by God, as he thinks, he never stops believing in Him. He exchanges his just God for an unjust and even malevolently mischievous one (21:13-22) without relinquishing God as his hope of salvation. It is a self-centred hope, however. Salvation lies for him in the vindication of his integrity. As the Comforters' wisdom is their standard of judgement, so Job's touchstone is that integrity. When they called it into question, he let go his despair to defend it. Having fought them to a standstill, he turns to God instead for justification.

Early in his second speech, he can still only wish God would hear his longing for death; by the end of it, he is strong enough to call out to Him, turning the sense of Psalm 8 inside out (7:17-18) in his plea to be left in peace. This is the way he responds to Eliphaz's advice to call on God for support. In Chapter 9, considering Bildad's picture of a just God, he protests the futility of anyone's calling God to account, yet Chapter 10 finds him beginning to rehearse a speech; and by the end of the first cycle, he is positively eager to "speak with the Almighty", however inscrutable, ready to argue with God and indeed to take his side against the false-tongued Comforters (13:3-4). Eliphaz's description of him in Chapter 15 as speaking boldly, with flashing eyes shows how far he has come from the despairing Job of Chapter 3. As they cease to hear the sense of his words, he stops hearing theirs, and they berate each other for speaking lies and nonsense. They are in different worlds, talking about different Gods. The more they insist on distance between God and frail humanity, the nearer Job moves to God.

Nevertheless, one more veil needs lifting before he can see and hear God; Elihu is set this task. The introduction to Elihu's speeches shows the nature of that veil: "So these three men gave up answering Job, for he

continued to think himself righteous". (32:1) Job still thinks God the God of retributive justice; he still believes his business with God is self-vindication. The speeches in which Elihu challenges this stance are repetitious and bombastic, I believe deliberately so. These qualities are emphasized by insertions of "Then Elihu went on to say" before three of his six chapters and his calls for attention (33:1, 31; 34:2, 16; 36:2; 37: 2, 14). Elihu is no sage or smooth-tongued orator. In Chapter 5, I suggested with Joseph Campbell that Elihu was the fool of myth. He also marks a break with the wisdom tradition, which abhors the words of fools: "A fool thinks he is always right; wise is the man who listens to advice". (Prov. 12:15) That is surely Elihu, yet he has an important role to play. He is designed as a new kind of teacher with a new kind of lesson.

Like his clumsy rhetoric, his content is at variance with wisdom thinking. His injunctions are rambling and often self-contradictory; yet at their heart - in Chapter 35, and reiterated in the two succeeding chapters - is a prophecy of the God waiting to answer Job. It is a God as far beyond human constructs of fairness as the heavens are above the earth and responsive to humanity in quite a different way.

Look up at the sky and then consider,
observe the rain-clouds towering above you.
How does it touch him if you have sinned?
However many your misdeeds, what does it mean to him?
If you do right, what good do you bring him.
or what does he gain from you?
Your wickedness touches only men, such as you are;
the right that you do affects none but mortal men,
but none of them asks, "where is God, my Maker
who gives protection by night,
who grants us more knowledge than the beasts of the earth
and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?"
So when they cry out, he does not answer,
because they are self-willed and proud.
All to no purpose! God does not listen,
the Almighty does not see.
The worse for you when you say He does not see me"!
Humble yourself in his presence, and wait for his word
(35:5-14)

The God who then appears, rightly described as Almighty, takes up the song which Elihu leaves in Chapter 37 with

Listen, listen to the thunder of God's voice
and the rumbling of his utterance.

Under the vault of heaven he lets it roll.
and his lightning reaches the ends of the earth;
there follows a sound of roaring
as he thunders with the voice of majesty. (37:2-4)

For Job, who does not argue with Elihu, has understood and is ready to listen.

Job, the man of so many self-expressive words, has little to say of this long-awaited interview with God, even when God urges him to speak. And this is hardly surprising. Can the essence of a mystic experience ever be put into words?

What reply can I give thee, I who carry no weight?
I put my finger to my lips.
I have spoken once and now will not answer again,
twice have I spoken, and I will do so no more. (40:4-5)

To assume, as John Ferguson does, that God is beating his accuser into submission is to be literal-minded to an extreme. The word pictures, retracing the Creation story from the appearance of light in darkness to the arrival of animal life, are God's self-introduction to Job. Only one item is missing from creation: humanity and Job himself fills that empty place. True, he cannot match God's creative power. His new found relationship is that of creature to creator, but the culmination of an awe-inspiring creation. This is a position independent of prestige, possessions or long life. It is a relationship dependent of rules and codes of justice; but the nature of the relationship makes humanity capable of creating such codes for its own needs. "Who grants us more knowledge than the beasts of the earth", Elihu has asked, "and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?" Job has seen the answer. He is secure in his relationship to God and is satisfied, like the seeker in Psalm 73. He has no more to say.

What have I in heaven but thee?
And having thee, I desire nothing else on earth (Ps. 73:25)

THE EPILOGUE

Now, what am I to make of the epilogue? It is certainly a discomfiting denouement. Would the whirlwind God that Job ultimately meets end by asking him to perform tasks and rituals and by giving him prizes after all? And would Job accept it if God did? MacLeish's J.B. for one spurns God's offer and gains credit with his audience by doing so. Worst of all, do not these rewards (for it is hard not to interpret them as such) make a mockery of the message from the whirlwind? God does dole out retributive justice after all: Job got it right; so Job gets rewarded, while the Comforters, doubtless bewildered, are publicly humiliated.

Yet, for all its problems, I believe the Epilogue is the only possible ending. To leave Job standing before the Almighty would be to leave the story unfinished. The hero must return, or else be seen to refuse to complete his mission. For after the moment of illumination, the vision needs to be "earthed". As the account of the Mount of Transfiguration demonstrates, insight gained on the heights needs fulfilment through application in the everyday world below. Like the Apostles, Job is a human being living among human beings. First his afflictions and then his distinctive insight isolated him from his fellows. In rage, on his dunghill, he had lost his children and servants; his kinsfolk and townsfolk grew frightened to approach him. He pushed his wife away; and in any case, as the Apologia shows (31:9-10), he was accustomed to think of her more as a chattel than a helpmate. Three old friends came to comfort him when no one else would; but hard words drove them and him worlds apart. Although he has become reconciled with God, he stands alone amid all creation. Now, he returns to the prosaic world. It is, as before, a realm of possessions and relationships, where that aspect of God is most manifest which has to do with human concerns. It was justice; can it now be love? Can Job, who has suffered alienation from everything around him, now be reconciled?

He is. First he is reconciled with his failed Comforters through the intercessions which necessitate his forgiveness of them. Indeed, he is asked to do for these men who have hurt and insulted what he has heretofore done for his dear lost children. Here surely is a lesson in how to relate to others in love rather than law. And the friends are in need of help.

The rigidity of their adherence to doctrine has barred them from right relationship with their friend and their God. They have not spoken of either "as they ought"; they have proved incapable of seeing either as they are. Blinkered by philosophy, they need this act of grace, mediated by Job, to bring them to God. It is fitting that the two-fold restoration of his property follows this generous act.

He is also reunited with friends and family, who now give him the comfort he previously lacked. He is reunited with his daily life through the restored possessions. He has children again, who are his immortality; and he acknowledges them as individuals by giving his daughters names. And he reconciled with God in the world by this restoration and acceptance of possessions and family. How difficult it is to accept what is offered, we are not told, nor how Job has been changed by his experiences. For we are back on the puppet theatre stage of the prose narrative. The answers to these questions depend in any case on the inexpressible lesson of the meeting with God. We have to be content with the courage his story gives us to learn our own lessons and apply them in an imperfect world.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION

1. The Book of Job operates on at least three levels: that of the instructive parable, the psychodynamic level of the poetic drama and one of participation by the reader. The first chapter of this thesis examined the first two of these, showing how the second grows out of and differentiates itself from the first, as the poetic Job rejects the conclusion which his patient prose counterpart has reached, and how the first comes into the poetry via the words of his three contemporaries. Mattiahu Tsevat's triangle, reproduced in the chapter, illustrates Job's dilemma. His apparently undeserved suffering causes an unbearable tension in the triangle so that it must give at one of its three connecting points: Job's righteousness, God as a God relating to humanity and the doctrine of retributive justice which the comforters espouse. For Tsevat, as for most readers, it is the last which falls.
2. The many uncertainties about the problematic Hebrew texts allow a wide range of interpretations, even among commentators and more so among individualistic interpreters. This divergence of interpretation extends to the nature of the very theodicy which might be presumed to be the purpose of the book. The second chapter of this thesis argued that the ambiguity is not flaw but the sign of a positive openness to the reader, to use the book as a vehicle to reach his/her own theodicy. It has proved a particularly apt vehicle for this century, with its sense of social injustice and fear of ultimate destruction and with its interest in the processes of human growth and change. The next three chapters examined how the book offers a paradigm for psychotherapy and grief therapy and for understanding psychological processes through archetype and myth.
3. Integration, the sign of maturity is the goal of therapy for psychiatrist Jack Kahn. His study Job's Illness formed the basis for the third chapter. He was drawn to Job both by his own background in Judaism and literature and by the likeness of Job's symptoms to those of actual psychiatric patients. This chapter showed how his book has itself accomplished an integration of his own interests in using Old Testament literature to demonstrate treatment of personal disintegration and re-integration. It must pose dangers to authentic

textual interpretation when one superimposes and anachronistic epistemological framework, and my analysis suggested that Kahn does not escape the pitfalls. His analysis proves more successful as a demonstration of the psychiatrist's art and the courage of the human struggle with personal pain.

4. Fellow psychiatrist Colin Murray Parkes criticised Kahn for diagnosing as mental illness what Parkes considered Job's perfectly normal grief. This comment inspired the fourth chapter, which first analysed Job's progress through the process of grieving the death of his old life and world view. I concluded, however, that Job's processes matched those of a dying person (as described by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross) better than those of grief for another's death. In particular, much of the book's strong emotion suggests the fear of death which both patients and doctors feel.
5. As the uses of Job in Chapters 3 and 4 illustrated, objectifying inner personal processes in a story may both clarify issues and highlight the universality of what seems most individual. As both Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell have shown, myths and the archetypal images which compose them express common human dimension of individual processes. Both writers have explored the mythic power of the Book of Job, and, after a general introduction, Chapter 5 examined their interpretations. Jung's Answer to Job was an ingenious development of the Joban theme but was perhaps flawed in that it seemed to me to focus on issues personal to the author, of which he was not necessarily conscious. The hero archetype, which Campbell examines in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, proved more generally applicable and seemed to fit Job most of the way. It broke down, however, when the hero should return home with the treasure or message: interestingly, just where the problems and opportunities of the Book of Job begin.
6. After studying contemporary psychologically-based interpretations of Job, it seemed fitting to conclude with my own. I outlined my present interpretation: one concerned with relationships. Job moves from relations with God and people which are based on fear to those which are based on love. I also showed, however, how this interpretation relates to other preoccupations in my life now, and how it has changed

as I have changed. These changes in interpretation over time provided a final support for the central hypothesis stated in Chapter 2: that rather than providing a theodicy, the book provides a vehicle for the creation of the reader's own.

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